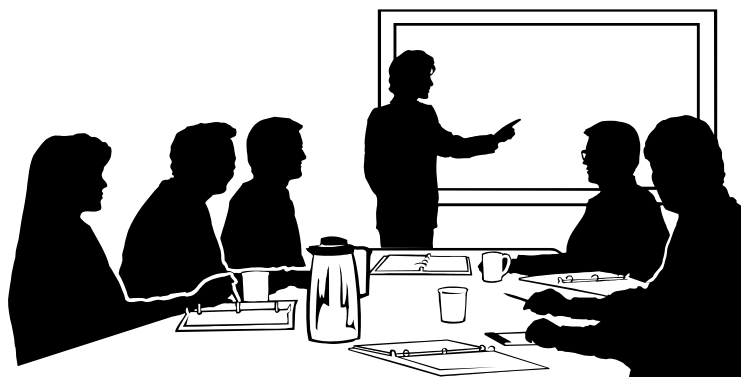


Preventing Problems Related to Alcohol Availability: Environmental Approaches

Parent and Community Guide

Prevention Enhancement Protocols System (PEPS)



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**Department of Health and Human Services
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Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
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This document is based on a larger scientific Reference Guide entitled "Reducing Problems Related to Alcohol Availability: Environmental Approaches" developed under the Prevention Enhancement Protocols System (PEPS) program. PEPS is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA/CSAP). Dr. Nelba Chavez is the Administrator of SAMHSA and Dr. Karol Kumpfer is the Director of CSAP. Dr. Prakash L. Grover is the Executive Editor of the PEPS series of publications.

The Reference Guide as well as this Parent and Community Guide was developed under the guidance of a panel of nationally known non-Government experts in this area, and the conclusions are based on their assessment and interpretation of the latest available research and practice knowledge on this topic. Therefore, statements included in this brochure represent the recommendations of the Expert Panel and do not reflect the opinions, official policy, or position of SAMHSA/CSAP, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For single copies of this document, contact SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345; 1-800-729-6686, 301-468-2600, or TDD 1-800-487-4889; or visit the website at <http://www.health.org/>. The documents are also available electronically from the National Institutes of Health at <http://text.nlm.nih.gov/ftsr/dbaccs/csap>.

Alcohol Availability

Communities need to take action by changing the settings and circumstances in which alcohol is sold.

We Should Be Concerned

Alcohol is readily available in most communities. We all know—but sometimes forget—that alcohol plays a very large role in:

- Automobile injuries and fatalities
- Homicide, manslaughter, and suicide
- Assault and robbery
- Domestic abuse and injury
- Child abuse and neglect
- Workplace injuries
- Public drunkenness and loitering

Alcohol is a key factor in:

33% of suicides

41% of traffic fatalities

50% of head injuries

50% of homicides

62% of assaults

68% of manslaughters

Besides human costs, alcohol-related problems are economically draining—about \$100 billion in 1995. And the cost is rising. These problems strain community resources such as fire, police, ambulance, and emergency departments, as well as the court systems.

More Must Be Done

Efforts directed solely at the individual drinker or alcohol outlet are not sufficient. Communities need to take action by changing the settings and circumstances in which alcohol is sold. Research has shown that controlling alcohol availability goes a long way toward preventing alcohol-related problems.

A few facts on alcohol availability make the challenge to communities even clearer.

- Where access to alcohol is greater, consumption is greater.
- When consumption rates are high, problems related to alcohol increase dramatically.

- Local communities have the power to control alcohol availability.
- Most communities do not make full use of the power and resources they have to prevent problems related to alcohol availability.

What Actions Can a Community Take?

Alcohol-related problems in the community can be prevented or reduced through local policies and programs to limit: the retail distribution of alcohol, the operation of alcohol outlets, and the management of events at which alcohol is sold.

Local public agencies and community groups are beginning to take action. They are realizing that they have both the right and the ability to minimize alcohol-related threats to the public health and safety of their residents. They are beginning to:

Write zoning ordinances specifically to manage bars, restaurants, convenience stores, and other places where alcohol is sold. These ordinances address such concerns as public decorum, litter, noise, traffic, loitering, harassment, underage access to alcohol, driving under the influence, alcohol-related crime and violence, and public intoxication.

Establish laws and policies that govern alcohol distribution methods, happy-hour policies, minimum legal purchase age, alcohol taxes, and licensing of alcohol outlets.

Enforce and modify laws and policies by working closely with the local police, the State Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) board, the city council, and university administrators.

Work closely with the ABC's management efforts to limit the hours and days of sale for retail outlets.

Enact public ordinances and regulations for special events such as sporting events **and for public locations** such as city parks and other city-owned facilities.

Take part in local planning and zoning efforts to manage the distribution of retail alcohol outlets. This effort includes the use of conditional use permits, which require individual review of each application for an alcohol sales permit.

Promote responsible beverage service by enacting and enforcing laws that require training for alcohol servers and establishment managers. Responsible beverage training—backed by effective enforcement—has been shown to reduce the risk of patron intoxication, intoxication-related problems, and alcohol sales to underage youth.

Are Some Approaches More Effective Than Others?

Yes! The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention found that six approaches show the most promise for success:

1. Preventing underage youth from obtaining alcohol.
2. Using taxes to raise the price of alcohol.
3. Promoting and enforcing responsible beverage service.
4. Changing the conditions of availability—for example, regulating outlet density, creating restrictions on alcohol sales, and developing regulations for alcohol at special events and locations.
5. Changing the hours and days of alcohol sales.
6. Using a community-based approach—involving concerned citizens and community groups in an effort to change local laws, regulations, and policies.

Where Can You Start?

Some alcohol outlets have problems in one or more of the following areas:

Serving practices—They endanger staff and patrons through such practices as selling to minors, selling with the intention to intoxicate, and selling to already intoxicated patrons.

Environment and facilities—They tolerate drug sales on-site, permit loitering, allow on-site consumption at outlets that are not licensed to do so, and violate restrictions on hours and days of sale.

Alcohol promotion and selling practices— They run promotions that encourage patrons to drink quickly and in large amounts, such as happy-hour drinking contests and two-for-the-price-of-one drinks, and they market fortified wine to known alcohol abusers.

Patron behavior management—They resist efforts to work with police and neighborhood groups to address complaints and reported problems about patron behavior.

Get Involved Today!

Join those who are developing a plan of action.

- Attend planning meetings.
- Speak up. Ask questions. Express your concerns. Share your experiences.
- Sign up. Put your name on the line. Let program organizers know about your special interests and talents.
- Help collect the facts that document local problems.

- Share everything you learn with neighbors and friends.
- Stay with the effort. Success takes time and determination.
- Talk with your own family about the dangers of minors' using alcohol, drinking and driving, drinking to intoxication, and other alcohol-related risks to safety and well-being.

Success Is Possible—Be Part of It

Thank you for your interest! Together we can prevent many of the problems that spring from uncontrolled alcohol availability.